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WHIRRAKEE

April 2011 Vol. 32 No. 3

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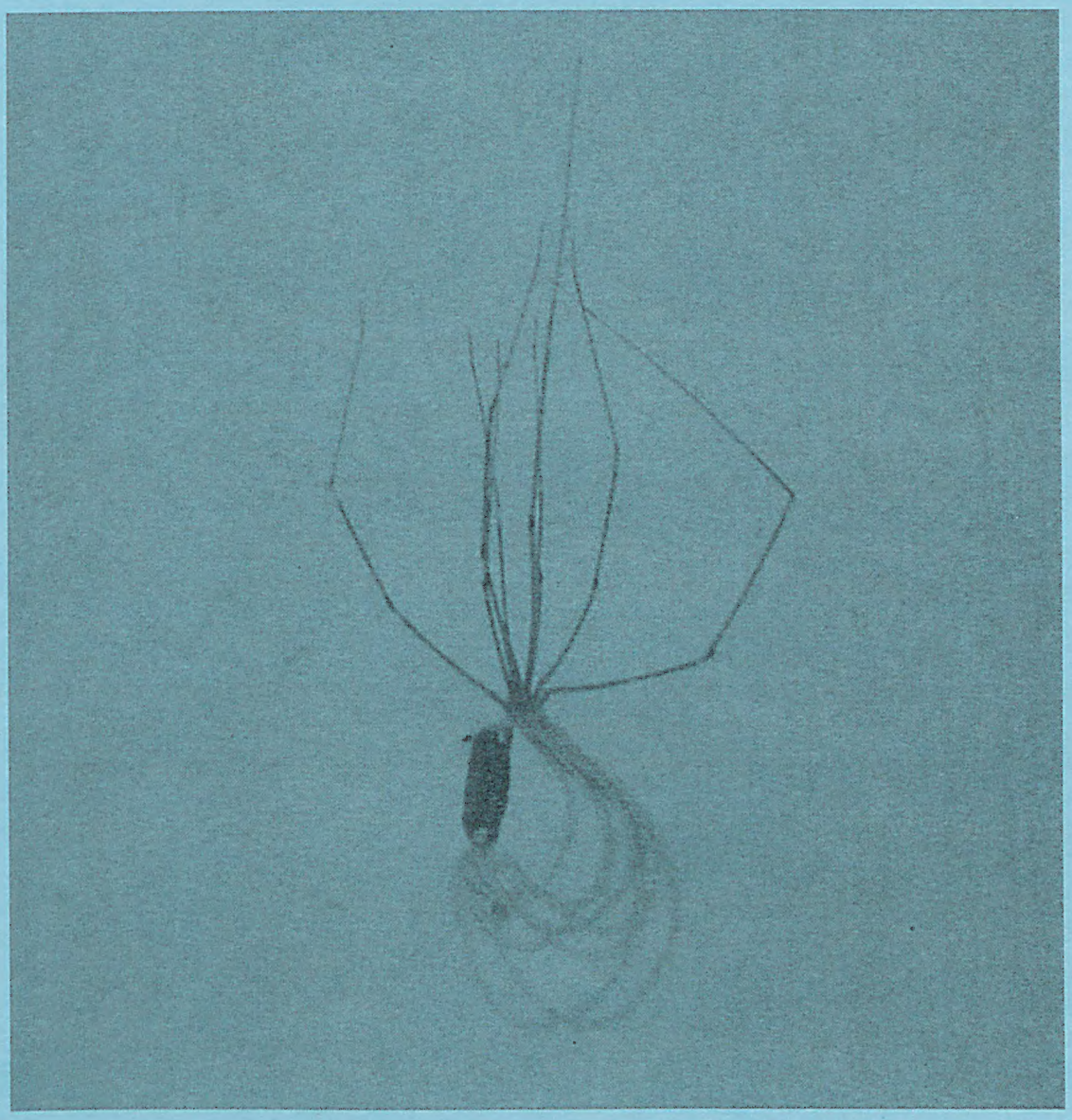

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552
ISSN 0812-423X

Office Bearers for 2010 - 2011

President	Jan Orr	5443 5668
Senior Vice President	Matthew Comer	0409 162627
Junior Vice President	*position vacant*	
Secretary	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Minute Secretary	Joy Clusker/Rod Orr	
Treasurer	Ben Goonan	
Membership Officer	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Excursion organiser	*position vacant*	
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan	
Librarian	Diana Collier (an assistant is still required)	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Matthew Comer	0409 162 627
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors)	0407 427179
Whirrakee contact	Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Stuart Fraser, Glenise Moors, Joy Clusker, Bill Holsworth plus *two positions vacant*

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Fauna Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club
Vol. 32, No. 3, April 2011
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note: Well, I am disappointed! No responses to the un-nice statement in the last paragraph of my translated chapter on hoverflies. I was hoping for some serious complaints! Perhaps nobody got to the last page? I was planning the next instalment this month, but will wait now till you have caught up with the reading. Looking at the table of contents, it looks as if the Orrs have filled this edition! That is not far off the truth, and I have had to hold over, other, more 'timeless' contributions until next month. Thanks to all of you, and all the attractive invertebrates who posed for the photos.

Front page photographer: Caitlyn Lehman (photo taken 29th March 2011, Flora Hill)
I found out very recently that Caitlyn has been an avid spider watcher and photographer this year (or perhaps a lot longer). Since then, she has sent me several wonderful spider pictures, but I think this one tops it all. It depicts only a little drama in the global sense, but what a moment! Caitlyn wrote: 'I don't believe this! Every time I think I must have exhausted the possibilities for spider-watching at home this season, I spot something else!! Frankly, I am proud of these photos – the best I could manage without using a flash (after all, I didn't want to distress the poor fellow) and with a good, but far from professional, camera. Needless to say, we watched in fascination as this Daddy Long Legs moulted by the kitchen door, while our dinner was re-heating in the microwave. A true miracle of nature. It really was amazing to watch the spider draw its legs out of the old skin, and then begin slowly 'pulsing' to strengthen them. The effect was like watching lungs expand and contract as the legs went from soft and loopy to stretched and jointed repeatedly. Remarkable.'

Short Notices

April General Meeting
Instead of the usual speaker, we are holding a grass identification workshop. See back page.

April Excursion and Autumn Bird Count

Sunday 10.4.2011 9:00 am - 1:00 pm
Bendigo Waste Water Treatment Plant
Meeting at the gate to the big lagoon on Wallenjoe Rd. The aim of the excursion is to conduct an accurate bird count of birds living in the BWWTP wetlands and surrounds.
Bring: - Suitable clothing and footwear for a morning spent outdoors
- Binoculars and also a spotting scope, if you have one.
- Note pad for recording
- Adequate food and water for 4 hours
Co-ordinators, Jane Cleary 54484396 and Jan Orr 54435668

Quest for Enamel Spider ID continued...

Rod Orr, still searching for the true identity of his enamel spiders (see February and March *Whirrakee*), sent his photos to Ron Atkinson (whose email was given as the address to send any spider questions) – Ron's opinion is that this spider is *Araneus bradleyi*, although he is still uncertain about the yellow spider (which Rod thought might be the same species).
Rod is happy to keep calling both spiders by the same name, but Ron wants more photos from other angles before he will commit himself, meaning that Rod will have to go back to look again. This might mean another year delay in finding the truth, as he will have to wait until the next Hyacinth Orchid flowering season at the end of the year.

March Excursion Report

by Rod Orr

In March, a small band of field nats went out to Keith & Phyllis Graham's property (on the Loddon River), to see something of the aftermath of the recent floods.

Keith explained to us that the river filled right up, to above the top of the bank and spread out over the floodplain. Keith and Phyllis' house is within 100 m of the river bank - they remarked on the enormously loud roaring sound that the floodwaters made. Fortunately, the water didn't rise above the level of their door-step. The debris carried by the flood-water lodged in the tops of many of the large, old River Red Gums and pushed them over into the river bed along the direction of the flow (see photo over the page). When we scrambled down as low as we could get in the river bed, we were more than 15 metres below the peak of the flood (see photo on page 10). Keith and Phyllis were very pleased to show us around and, after they had their lunch, they rejoined us at Orchid Dam in the Inglewood forest.

This special area of forest has been looking very bedraggled during the last few years of our protracted drought, but it had grown back beautifully and many plants were in bud or flowering. We still found *Lobelia gibbosa* in flower although this was surprisingly late to see it in such good condition and many of the Autumn- and Winter-flowering plants were also growing very well. Parson's Bands Orchids were quite common here, Autumn Midge Orchids were developing seed capsules, Flame Heath and Urn Heath were in bud, and large clumps of Tall Bluebell were found - a real mixture of late and early flowers all sustained by the higher than normal rainfall.
The bird life was very interesting as well despite the nuisance rain that wet anyone without a coat or umbrella - White-browed Babblers refused to get wet - one just sat sheltering in a Wallowa bush very close to us. This is going to be a special place again in Spring and well worth another visit then.

We are all very grateful to Keith and Phyllis for showing us around the Loddon River frontage of their property, so that we could have a better understanding of the behaviour of this river when it is in flood, and the impact of the recent flooding. It was a very enjoyable day for us all.

March excursion to the Loddon River.

The river looks pretty tame here now, but the damage done is pretty dramatic. Photo by Jan Orr

Photo below by Joy Clusker

The beautiful moth below is a *Utetheisa* sp., but which species?...more detective work ahead for the photographer Rod Orr. The flower it is sitting on is *Glycine clandestina*

Utetheisa pulchelloides

Moths of Victoria, vol 2, CD

Loddon River floodplain near Bridgewater
Utetheisa lotrix?
Missing red spot on front wing

...Rod went to consult 'Moths of Victoria Part 2' and found two possibilities: 'even though Peter Marriott had said that the two species were very similar, he had given some detail of their differences in the CD that accompanied Volume 2, so I looked again at my photos.

I'll have to get in contact with him, and perhaps even return to the approximate location to capture a specimen to examine properly, but it does look as though the one I saw was *Utetheisa lotrix* - it is missing a red spot near the hind margin of the forewings. It's a very small difference isn't it? A bit of a fine distinction to use to split into two species!'

Below is a scorpion with its young, discovered by a keen-eyed participant of the Family Nature Club

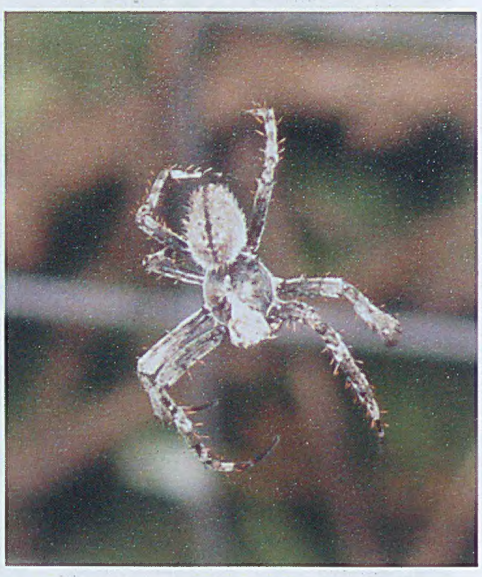
The Family Nature Club seems to be developing very well - the children, parents and other family members have been very keen and excited on each of our first 2 activities.
Several of our faithful Field Naturalists have helped the activity leaders on each occasion - thanks to their help, things have gone very smoothly. We are all finding so much more in the bush with all of these interested young people with sharp eyes - this is just one example.
The boy who found this scorpion with its young, told us all that is the scorpion season - everyone agreed! The scorpion had been discovered by ants and was defending the family very effectively by catching the ants between those powerful pinchers and crushing them.

Some more attractive invertebrates… Photographer: Caitlyn Lehman

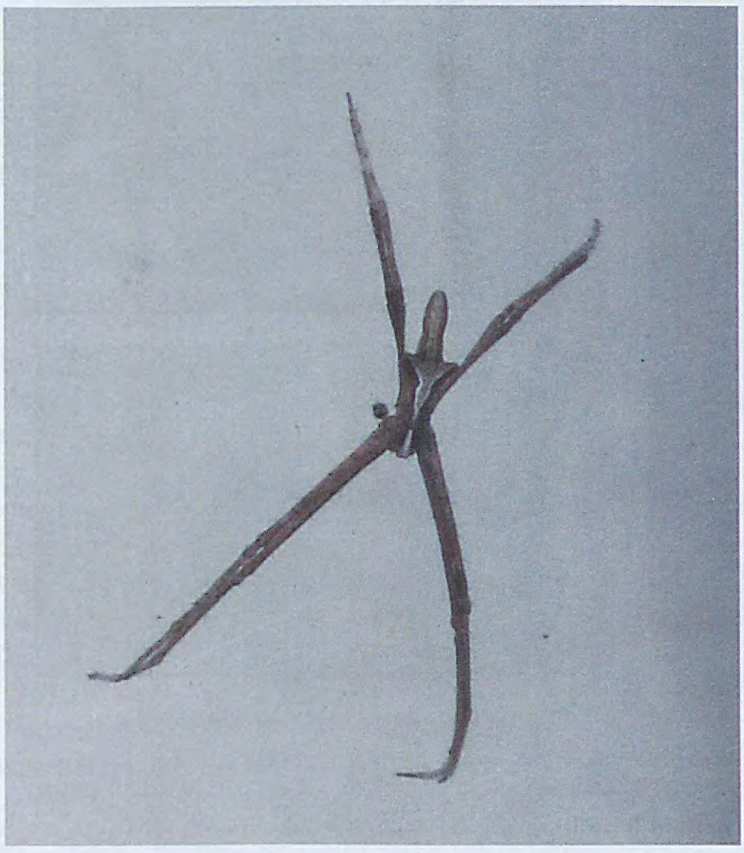
This two-tipped orb weaver *Eriophora biapicata* who was building her web late one night at the photographers house in Flora Hill had a nearby male who was literally 'just hanging around', perhaps planning to make a move later in the night.

← Female

Male ↓



The strange-looking spider below is a type of St Andrew's Cross spider (*Argiope* sp.). They get their name from the 'diagonal' cross shape they make with their paired legs, which apparently resembles the cross this saint was martyred on.



Caitlyn is wondering if anyone knows the name of this spider. It looks to her a bit like the one above (*E. biapicata*) except the obvious white cross on its back.

Swallowtails in Bendigo Photographers: Jan and Rod Orr

This beautiful male Orchard Swallowtail, *Papilio aegeus*, emerged from its pupa somewhere in the Orr's Grevillea bush and posed for several minutes while its wings hardened. That's why it is in such perfect condition.

The larvae of this species looks perfectly like a fresh bird dropping. It was pictured in the March *Whirrakee*.

Below, the Orchard Swallowtail larva has attached itself to the skirting board and is about to pupate (the remainder of the last larval stage's skin was left below on the tiles). See page 8 for the story as to why it settled there! ↓

↑ larva of Dingy Swallowtail

This photo is of the Little Swallowtails (usually referred to as Dingy Swallowtail, *Papilio anactus*), that emerged not long after the launch of the Family Nature Club, as mentioned in Jan's article below. The adult emerged from the empty, whitish pupa case in the background and attached itself to another pupa, which has developed upside down.

A butterfly skirts the room
Author: Jan Orr

This observation started out as a pressing question. What will we have as an 'attention grabber' for the Family Nature Club launch on February 16? We know how the media love to photograph cute children with cute animals.
"I know , I'll look for caterpillar larvae." I think. This part was relatively easy, as I had noticed the Little Swallowtail butterflies that had been flying around our citrus trees, and I found eggs and larvae. Snip, snip off came the sprigs of leaves with their munching cargo and the display was done.
But, whilst I find caterpillars fascinating, are they exciting enough for an eye-catching photo? I decided to look further and was delighted to find several Christmas Beetles on sapling Grey Box near Inglewood. So into the bug-box they went.
Come the day, the children and the Bendigo Advertiser photographer and reporter were there, as were the insects.
The 'attention grabber' by a metric-mile was the Christmas Beetle, while the butterfly larvae were barely looked at, even though one caterpillar was busily pupating. It had made its girdle and was fastened to the branch and had assumed the pupa position.
If I had found a maturing pupa, and if it had by a miraculous coincidence it had chosen that morning to emerge, would that insect have been the 'attention grabber'?

Post-script
I brought the insects home. The beetles were released to continue their defoliation of the local eucalypts, but I kept the caterpillars and continued to provide them with fresh citrus leaves. However, I was going away for a week so I prevailed upon Joy Clusker to 'larvae and pupa-sit'.
She returned them to me a week ago, on the 1.3.2011 with 'interest'! She had found an Orchard Swallowtail caterpillar and had added it to the brood. It happily munched, beside its Little Swallowtail cousins, through the citrus leaves until Sunday morning (6.3.2011), when I found it GONE.
Now, I had placed these on the bookshelf in our living-room, so there were plenty of secret places for a pupating insect to conceal itself. Searching produced no results until Rod (I must admit he is the eyes of the partnership) spotted it later on that night.
It had attached itself to the skirting board, a good 5 metres from the bookshelf. It had made its girdle and whilst still a caterpillar in appearance, was busy pupating so it had to be left there to get on with it. (Never mind that it was in the busiest part of the room and rather exposed to accidental damage from flying feet.) It took more than 24 hours to shed its skin and assume the 'bird dropping' appearance of this species.
So there it remains sheltered by rearranged furniture

Post post-script
The original Little Swallowtail pupa emerged on Monday (7.3.2011) 19 days after pupation.

Notes and observations from February meeting

compiled by Rod Orr

Special Announcements
Anne Bridley - CSIRO publication: David Watson. *Mistletoes of southern Australia* $49.95
This looks like a really interesting book

Anna Murphy (DSE): Threatened Species. 12-20 spp. pa. How to choose these species? Some common species may be threatened/ neglected. IUCN criteria - this approach produces a score for each species - this method could/should be used locally. We are invited to nominate local species to add to the DSE list & to assist with searches for threatened spp. Anna works on 5 spp. - need to incorporate this information into fire plans etc.
Please contact Anna if you can help.
ph 5430 4730, mob 0427 842 510
email: anna.h.murphy@dse.vic.gov.au

Observations

Jane Cleary: Wanderer; Orchard Swallowtail; Lesser Wanderer. Both wanderers seen in Jane's garden and both have produced larvae. Citrus butterfly - hot, wet weather - more commonly found in the North - probably require warmer weather. Newly emerged locusts.

Jan Orr: Wanderer has visited the last Swan Plant in our garden (survived weed eradication) which has at least 10 eggs laid on it. Orchard Swallowtails have also been seen flying through our garden in Kennington - they have been reported from several locations across Bendigo.

Anne Bridley: Bluetongue lizard sheltering under the meeting hall - seen when it just poked its nose out (2nd Feb). Butterflies seen in Anne's garden in Spring Gully were: Dingy Swallowtail (or Citrus Butterfly, or Small Swallowtail), Common Brown, Painted Lady, Australian Admiral.

Joy Clusker: Fruit Bats visited their plum tree each night at about 4 pm. Hyacinth Orchids were visited at Daylesford. Joy also has Wanderer Butterflies and caterpillars on a Swan Plant.

Pam & John Land: An Olive Legless Lizard was found dead at their property on Jan. 28th (could have been dropped by a bird?). A budgie was seen at Neilborough (Feb 9th).

Ian Magee: A pure white Fox was seen in farmland near the Mt Hoogley Nature Reserve (Pilchers Bridge) on December 10th.

Sabine Wilkens: Crickets in plague proportions! Why? What resource is so plentiful for them right now, that there are so many of them ? – is it food, shelter, water, temperature or a combination of these? All very interesting!

Additional observation reported to Anne Bridley: Square-tailed Kite seen by Dale Gibbons overhead at Maiden Gully about 5:45pm on Sunday 13 Feb.

Notes and Observations from March meeting

compiled by Rod Orr

Special Announcements:

Tim Young's vegetables were brought by Tim for members to share

Family Nature Club - successful so far overall Request for continued support from members.

Observations

Elaine Doling: Frog calls described from a small brown frog - Ewings Tree Frog probably.

Glenise Moors: Cossid moth larvae, being cared for inside, in leaf litter in a box, escaped into the kitchen, made a curtain along the bench down to the floor, were preyed on by Daddy Long-legs, swarmed up the table legs, galvanised Glenise who rang for help, but unsuccessfully, and eventually resorted to insecticide spray to prevent a complete takeover of her kitchen. No photos of any of this action, unfortunately, considering Glenise's graphic description of the event.

Rod & Jan Orr: Travelled to Tang Tang & Terricks and saw large numbers of Plumed Whistling Ducks on a dam North of Mitiamo, grazing on flooded & ruined crops nearby, across the road in a large ephemeral wetland & also on dams in the Terrick Terrick grassland paddock (where they had not seen water before). When they were startled by traffic, flew and whistled it was like being in the Northern Territory.

They also remarked on the good growth of native grasses at Tang Tang, but were dismayed by the very healthy and flowering patch of *Solanum elaeagnifolium* (White Horsenettle, or Silverleaf Nightshade) near the Prairie Silo - still there growing strongly after many decades of neglect by weed authorities despite its reputation as a difficult weed and its status as a Declared Noxious Weed of Victoria & a Declared Noxious Weed of Australia. It was reported many decades ago growing at Calivil, but has never been eradicated or even controlled despite its

status and reputation and has spread from there!

The strong recovery of understorey plants at the Terricks is something to see after so many dry years when only minimal growth was possible.

Saw it but needed convincing!

Author: Jan Orr

Recently Rod and I towed our caravan to Nelson, where we stayed at Kywong caravan park. We spent three days there, and as the caravan park is surrounded by coastal scrub it is a good place for bird watching.
On the morning of Monday 22, I followed bird calls down a walking track to the edge of a clearing in the scrub. I was standing listening to bird calls, mostly Brown Thornbills, Whitebrowed Scrubwrens and Silvereyes, when I noticed a bird I had never encountered before run out from the undergrowth and begin 'scratch-feeding' along the ground.

Its long tail and strong running gait clearly indicated that it was a ground feeder. But it was its rich red-brown crown and its mottled grey-brown breast, that really threw me. It also had a short whitish eyebrow and its red-brown cheek was defined by the buff-white of its throat.

Back to the van and its bird books I went. I was stumped as I think I had too much detail in my head to sensibly use the books. So I did the right thing and sought verification and took Rod to the viewing spot, and would you believe, this co-operative bird came out and fed again!

This time it was clear that the bird was probably a Rufus Bristlebird. Later I read in Lower Glenelg National Park notes, that the National Park is a stronghold for this bird and I was finally convinced.

The rest of my bird list is as follows: Grey Shrike Thrush, Grey Fantail, Yellow Robin, Crimson Rosella, Magpie, Little Wattlebird, Red Wattlebird, New Holland Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, Superb Fairywren, Red-browed Finch, Yellow-tailed Cockatoo, and Olive Whistler.

Squirrel Glider report

Naomi Hodgens and Beau Kent are the authors of a Squirerel Glider report, compiled for DSE, with the title *Squirrel Glider,* Petaurus norfolcensis – *Distribution and Habitat Analysis for the Campaspe River between Echuca and Barnadown, North Central Victoria.*
Naomi writes:' The study unfortunately didn't cover anywhere near the desired amount of sites for an effective scientific report. However we were happy with the achievement of being able to positively identify the isolated population & provide recommendations for landholders and managers to benefit the species and perhaps work towards increasing the range & numbers of the population'.

If anybody is interested in this study, and would like a copy of the report, please contact Stuart Fraser or Sabine Wilkens.

Another impression from the March excursion

Still a long way below the high water mark –

L to R: Kerrie Norris, Phyllis Graham, Keith Graham, Bev Culvenor, Jan Orr (top of her head), Jane Cleary, Joy Clusker, Matthew Comer (Rod took the photo), all looking at flood impacts of the Loddon River.

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday, April 13 7.30pm
Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Workshop 'Identifying local native grasses'.
Don't forget to bring along your specimens! (there was a flyer about this in the December *Whirrakee*)

Wednesday, May 11 7.30pm
Associate Professor Alan York from the University of Melbourne will try and answer the question "What can ants tell us about fire management outcomes?"

Wednesday, June 8 7.30pm
Dr Pam Whiteley (Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Melbourne) will talk about 'Wildlife health surveillance in Victoria'

Wednesday, July 13 7.30pm
A joint presentation by Dr Jason Goodger and Ms Allison Heskes (PhD candidate), both from the School of Botany, University of Melbourne: 'Botanical imaging in the 21st century: using lasers to unravel the mysteries of essential oil glands in eucalypts'.

April Excursion and Autumn Bird Count

Sunday 10.4.2011 9:00 am - 1:00 pm
Bendigo Waste Water Treatment Plant
Meeting at the gate to the big lagoon on Wallenjoe Rd
The aim of the excursion is to conduct an accurate bird count of birds living in the BWWTP wetlands and surrounds.
Bring:
- Suitable clothing and footwear for a morning spent outdoors
- Binoculars and also a spotting scope, if you have one.
- Note pad for recording
- Adequate food and water for 4 hours

Co-ordinators, Jane Cleary 54484396 and Jan Orr 54435668

Fauna Group
This group normally meets (in the clubrooms) on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm. New and seasoned Club members are most welcome to attend.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

Planned Bendigo Family Nature Club
The Bendigo Sustainability Group, BDEC and BFNC will combine their approach to this. Two sessions have been conducted and they are gathering momentum. Many hands are needed on the days, so if you can help out, please contact Jan Orr. All activities will be held on 3rd Sunday of the month.

Loddon Shire Nature Tourism Brochure

A handy brochure with a map of the Loddon Shire on one side showing the location of various parks & reserves & notes on the other side is now available from the Loddon Visitor Information Centre. Ph 5494 3489, email loddonvisitorinformation@loddon.vic.gov.au